

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 IO-13 /106 W
-----128164 020907Z /21

R 020030Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3229
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT MORESBY 0626

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PP, ID
SUBJECT: STRONG INDONESIAN REACTION TO AUSTRALIAN PRESS REPORT
AND REBEL ACTIVITIES IN PNG BY WEST IRIANS

REF: PORT MORESBY 0579

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING EXAGGERATED AUSTRALIAN PRESS REPORT
OF "9000 DEAD" IN WEST IRIAN FIGHTING SINCE 1976 AND WORD OF
SENIOR FONOFF OFFICIALS' MEETING WITH REBEL LEADERS, INDONESIAN
EMBASSY ISSUED STRONG STATEMENTS QUESTIONING LIBERTIES
GRANTED FOREIGN REPORTERS, WARNING GPNG AGAINST "DOUBLE
LOYALTY" AND SAYING ISSUE OF REBEL ACTIVITIES IN PNG COULD
NOT BE LEFT "HANGING FOREVER". WATERS WERE MUDDIED FURTHER
BY REBEL "CABINET MINISTERS" RESIDENT IN PNG WHO, IN
MAY 1 PRESS STORY, DROP CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE (REFTEL) AND
QUESTION INDONESIA'S RIGHT TO TELL GPNG TO DEMAND REAFFIRMATIONS
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OF LOYALTY. UNFORTUNATELY, LATEST TURMOIL OVER WEST
IRIANS' ACTIVITIES HAS ERUPTED ON EVE OF FONMIN'S SCHEDULED
VISIT TO INDONESIA. END SUMMARY.

2. STIR CAUSED BY NAMING OF TEN PNG CITIZENS AND PERMISSIVE
RESIDENTS TO WEST IRIAN REBEL CABINET (REFTEL) COMPOUNDED
BY APRIL 24 ARTICLE IN SYDNEY MORNING HERALD BY MARK BAKER

AND REACTION THERETO. BAKER, ON BASIS TALKS ON PNG SIDE OF BORDER, CLAIMED 3515 INDONESIAN SOLDIERS AND 5209 IRIANESE KILLED IN FIGHTING SINCE JANUARY 1976. SUBSEQUENT ARTICLE BY RESPECTED PETER HASTINGS STATED OPM MILITARY ARM HAD SOME 700, INCLUDING WIVES AND CHILDREN, AND PERHAPS 50 WEAPONS. TERMED IT OF NO MORE THAN NUISANCE VALUE AND LABELED OPM AS "GENERALLY SICK ORGANIZATION", BADLY SPLIT.

3. ON 26 APRIL INDONESIAN EMBASSY HERE ISSUED PRESS RELEASE BLASTING BAKER ARTICLE AND REFERRED TO HIS HAVING CLAIMED TO HAVE SPENT TWO WEEKS WITH REBELS IN PNG TERRITORY. EMBASSY SAID IT WISHED "TO SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM THE HOST COUNTRY AS TO THE EXTENT OF FREEDOM GIVEN TO FOREIGN REPORTERS, TO ACT AS THE MOUTH PIECE OF ACTIVE UNFRIENDLY ELEMENTS, OR TO BE ENGAGED IN SENSATIONAL NEWS HUNTING IN OUR BORDER AREAS". AFTER EXPRESSING ITS CONVICTION OF GPNG'S RESOLUTENESS TO TAKE PROPER MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM, THE EMBASSY CONCLUDED, "FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA FULLY REALIZES OUR FIRMNESS IN DEFENDING OUR SOVEREIGN STATE AND TERRITORIES, AND THAT ANY INTERFERENCE IN OUR GOOD AND CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP IS AGAINST THE INTEREST OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND INDONESIA."

4. A DAY LATER PRESS REPORTED THAT DFAT SECRETARY SIAGURU ANNOUNCED HE HAD MET SEPARATELY WITH JACOB PRAI AND SETH RUMKOREM ON CONFIDENTIAL

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APRIL 14 AND 15 IN PORT MORESBY AND HAD TOLD THEM "WE KNOW WHERE YOUR CAMPS ARE AND WILL BURN THEM DOWN IF YOU DON'T MOVE THEM OUT OF OUR COUNTRY." INDONESIAN INFORMATION OFFICER FOLLOWED UP, TELLING PRESS INDOS APPRECIATED GPNG PREDICAMENT BUT SAID PNG MUST NOT HAVE A "DOUBLE LOYALTY". CONTINUING, INDONESIAN EMBASSY SPOKESMAN ASKED FOR MORE DIALOGUE, SAID THEY WERE NOT ASKING FOR AN IMMEDIATE SOLUTION, BUT ADDED, "WE DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE THE CASE HANGING FOREVER". FINALLY, INDO SPOKESMAN DISCOUNTED INVASION, SAYING INDONESIA, IF IT WANTED TO INVADE, WOULD DO SO WHILE PNG STILL WEAK AND WOULD NOT WAIT FOR IT TO GATHER STRENGTH. ALSO, INDONESIA, HE SAID, HAD MILITARY FORCE TO WIPE OUT REBELS BUT HAD REJECTED SUCH MOVE AS DETRIMENTAL TO DEVELOPMENT.

5. PRESS OF MAY 1 CARRIED STATEMENT BY FONMIN OLEWALE ADDING TO SIAGURU STATEMENT. OLEWALE SAID HE HAD LED THE TALKS WITH PRAI AND RUMKOREM AND THAT MINDEF MONA, DEFENCE FORCE COMMANDER BGEN DIRO AND SIAGURU HAD BEEN PRESENT. HE REITERATED SIAGURU'S POINT THAT THE REBELS WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO USE PNG TERRITORY AS A "SANCTUARY FROM WHICH TO MOUNT ANTI-INDONESIAN CAMPAIGNS".

6. WATERS WERE MUDDIED FURTHER OVER THE WEEKED BY POST COURIER ARTICLE QUOTING "SPOKESMAN" REPRESENTING THE TEN REBEL MINISTERS HERE AS QUESTIONING INDONESIA'S RIGHT TO DEMAND REAFFIRMATIONS OF LOYALTY TO GPNG. THE STRONGLY WORDED STATEMENT CONCLUDED THAT THE TENOR OF THE BORDER PROBLEM "PERSISTENTLY PUT PNG ON THE DEFENSIVE REQUIRING THE GOVERNMENT TO APOLOGIZE AND MAKE EXPLANATIONS TO INDONESIA. THE GOVERNMENT IN FACT SAYS INDONESIA IS RIGHT. THIS MUST BE STOPPED."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT MORESBY 0626

7. COMMENT: THE INDONESIAN EMBASSY'S RELEASES WERE STRONG AND OFFENSIVE. YET GPNG HAS LITTLE ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PRESSURE THE REBELS. DURING ACCREDITATION VISIT OF U.S. ARMATT WEEK OF APRIL 25, NUMBER OF SENIOR DEFENCE FORCE OFFICERS EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER INDONESIAN INTENTIONS VIS-A-VIS PNG. THESE CONCERNS WERE LONG TERM AND QUESTION OF CURRENT DIFFERENCES WERE NOT RAISED.

8. DIALOGUE WITH INDONESIANS ON BORDER IS CONTINUING WITH MEETINGS IN VANIMO ON NORTH COAST AND DARU ON SOUTH COAST AND ON INDONESIAN SIDE ON ALTERNATE MONTHS. DEFENCE FORCE TELLS US ITS OFFICERS HAVE BEGUN TO ATTEND MEETINGS IN VANIMO AND JAYAPURA.

9. WHILE WE BELIEVE BAKER ARTICLE TO BE GROSS EXAGGERA-

TION, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT REBELS HAVE HAD BASE CAMPS
IN PNG TERRITORY. DEFENCE FORCE COMMANDER DIRO TOLD
EMBOFF SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THAT ONE OF HIS EXTENDED
RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS HAD COME ACROSS A RUMKOREM CAMP
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AND HAD OBERVED ACTIVITIES FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS BEFORE
WITHDRAWING UNDETECTED. DIRO WAS INCENSED AT WHAT HE
TERMED AS RUMKOREM HAVING GONE BACK ON HIS WORD.

10. TURNABOUT OF AT LEAST SOME REBEL "CABINET MINISTERS"
WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY DISCLAIMED KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR APPOINT-
MENTS AND EXPRESSED LOYALTY TO PNG, INEXPLICABLE.
INDONESIANS CANNOT HELP BUT BELIEVE SOMEONE IN HIGH PLACE
HERE MUST BE GIVING THEM ENCOURAGEMENT. NEVERTHELESS,
EVERY GOVERNMENT STATEMENT TO DATE HAS BEEN FIRMLY
OPPOSED TO REBELS PLAYING ANY ACTIVE ROLE WHATSOEVER IN
PNG. TIMING OF LATEST FUROR IS UNFORTUNATE AS FONMIN
OLEWALE IS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE FOR VISIT TO INDONESIA MAY
10 UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES NOT UNLIKE THOSE UNDER WHICH PM
SOMARE LEFT FOR INDONESIA IN 1976.
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